Red Line/Blue Line Connector Project
Public Meeting #1

LOCATION OF MEETING: Shriners Hospital, Boston, MA

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: October 26, 2009, 5:30 PM

Attendance: (see attachment): 51

Staff:
Scott Hamwey, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), formerly named the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT)
Kate Fichter, MassDOT
Mark Pelletier, STV
Mark Ennis, STV
Kristine Gorman, STV
Kristine Wickham, VHB
Michael Sutton, VHB
Regan Checchio, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)
Nancy Farrell, RVA

MEETING HANDOUTS:
- Fall 2009 Fact Sheet

MEETING PRESENTATION:
Nancy Farrell, Manager of Public Involvement from Regina Villa Associates, opened the meeting and recognized the public officials and Project Working Group members present. She then introduced Scott Hamwey, Project Manager for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Mr. Hamwey explained that the proposed Red Line/Blue Line Connector Project would extend the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Blue Line approximately 1,500 feet beneath Cambridge Street to make a connection with the Red Line at Charles/MGH Station. He noted that the project had many goals including:
- Connecting the only two of Boston's rapid transit lines that do not currently intersect,
- Improving mobility and regional access for East Boston, the North Shore, Cambridge, and the western suburbs,
- Increasing transit ridership,
- Reducing automobile travel through downtown – improving air quality and reducing congestion,
- Reducing passenger volumes at downtown transfer stations, and
- Enhancing access to Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and surrounding medical facilities.

Mr. Hamwey then introduced Mark Pelletier, Project Manager for STV Incorporated, to make the technical presentation.

Mr. Pelletier reviewed the background of the corridor and planning context. He explained that the project had been studied in the past; in 1986, there was a Feasibility Study and Final Report. In 1987, a Preliminary Design and Environmental Study was conducted. As part of the Central Artery project, the Commonwealth made several commitments to encourage public transit ridership. These commitments are contained within the State Implementation Plan (SIP). In 2008, the Commonwealth affirmed its commitment to the design of the Connector. In 2007, an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) was filed.

Mr. Pelletier said that the project team is currently finalizing the Alternatives Analsyis/10% Conceptual Engineering Report. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) will be filed in 2010. In 2011, the EIR and Final Design will be completed.

Mr. Pelletier said that the project could impact Blue Line service, increasing the number of peak period trains required and adding about five minutes to Blue Line round trips. The Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) is updating a ridership analysis the MBTA completed in 2005. At that time, the project was expected to generate approximately 3,100 new daily transit trips, with between 3,800 and 9,000 weekday riders.

Mark Ennis, STV, reviewed the three alternatives under examination:

- No Build
- Alternative 1: Red Line/Blue Line Connector with Bowdoin Station Eliminated
- Alternative 2: Red Line/Blue Line Connector with Bowdoin Station Relocated

Mr. Ennis explained that the Project Working Group helped generate a set of evaluation criteria that is being used to compare alternatives. Criteria include the benefits and impacts related to transit service/operations, construction impacts, community impacts, environment, cost impacts, and coordination with other projects in the area. (The full list of criteria is posted on the project website, www.mass.gov/eot/redblue.)

Mr. Ennis outlined the two build alternatives under consideration which would use two different construction methodologies: cut and cover and mining. Cut and cover construction works from the surface down, with the contractor excavating to the desired grade while temporary decks are used to maintain the roadway on the surface. Mining requires entrance and exit shafts and it would include some cut-and-cover construction for the station connection at Charles/MGH.

<u>Alternative 1: Bowdoin Station Eliminated</u>
If a cut and cover methodology is used, it would be employed for most of the alignment on Cambridge Street. The Blue Line tracks would split beyond the Charles/MGH Station to provide train storage space. The southern tail track weaves through existing below-grade structural piers that support the elevated Red Line tracks. An emergency egress would be built at the end of the Blue Line platform and would reach the median on Cambridge Street near the Anderson Street intersection. Another approach would be to use cut and cover construction only in the area east of Bowdoin Station, and use mined tunneling for the rest of the alignment. This alternative would minimize the impacts to

utilities and to Cambridge Street within the mined tunnel portion of the alignment. There would be some street impacts at Charles/MGH Station as well as at Bowdoin Station.

Alternative 2: Bowdoin Station Relocated
If a cut and cover methodology is used, it would be similar to Alternative 1, although the Bowdoin Station platform and track would be relocated. The proposed station entrance and mezzanine level would be re-used with accessibility upgrades added. An emergency egress hatch would be located within the raised median on Cambridge Street. The mined tunnel alternative would essentially be the same alternative as the mined tunnel in Alternative 1, with Bowdoin Station relocated. There would be a shaft at New Chardon Street for the mining work, and an access shaft at Charles/MGH. There would also be a cut and cover segment in the area of New Sudbury and Somerset Streets.

Ms. Farrell then opened the meeting up for questions.

DISCUSSION:
Joe MacDonald, West End Civic Association, asked if excavation near the storage tracks would be necessary. Mr. Pelletier said the team is coordinating with the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (MEEI) to see if the work could be coordinated with their plans for renovating the parking lot.

Bob D'Amico, Boston Transportation Department, asked what the assumed number of car train sets will be used for the Blue Line. Mr. Pelletier said the assumption was for six-car train sets.

Linda Jordan-Dow asked for more information about the vertical shafts near Lindall Place (between Grove and West Cedar). Mr. Ennis said the shafts would mostly be confined to the median. Michael Sutton, VHB, confirmed that there would still be access to Lindall Place. Mr. Ennis added that the two shafts are at 55 feet below grade. Ms. Jordan asked about the projected ridership. Mr. Pelletier explained that the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) is currently doing projections for the year 2030, including new demographic projections for the area. He noted that that there has been significant development in the area since the first studies were conducted.

A participant asked about the change in depth between Government Center Station, Bowdoin Station and Charles/MGH. Mr. Ennis said that Bowdoin is about 25-50 ft. in depth due to grade changes.

An attendee asked if the relocated Bowdoin Station in Alternative 2 would be open during all service hours for the MBTA rapid transit system. Mr. Pelletier said that is the current assumption.

Brian Sylvain said he is a member of the Tunnel Workers Union and urged the Commonwealth to use the mined tunnel approach. He said he is currently working on a Massachusetts Water Resources Authority project that employs a tunnel-boring machine.

A participant noted that at the current Bowdoin Station, there is a persistent jaywalking problem. He suggested moving the access point to the edge of the block. Mr. Ennis

said the project team would examine this and look to improve the situation while minimizing surface impacts.

Marie Cantlon, West End Civic Association, said that she did not understand why the Commonwealth was going to all this expense and construction when it was a relatively short walk from Bowdoin Station to Charles/MGH. Mr. Hamwey said that the Commonwealth has a legal commitment to complete design on the project. He explained that, while the distance between the two stations was relatively short, it was of sufficient length to prevent some people traveling to MGH from using public transit. He also noted that the need to make multiple transfers discourages people from using transit and that this project would benefit those trying to connect between the Blue and Red Lines, who must currently make two transfers.

A participant suggested making improvements to help pedestrians cross Cambridge Street. Mr. Sutton said he would examine the pedestrian timing at Sudbury and New Chardon Streets. Mr. Pelletier said the team would also examine reducing the width of the crossing.

John Vitagliano, Town of Winthrop, said he supported the mined tunneling option and overall project. He noted that the project would provide Blue Line riders access not only to MGH but into Cambridge and Central Square.

An attendee noted that he was moving from East Boston to somewhere on the Red Line due to the difficulty he has commuting from the Blue Line into Harvard Square. It may seem like it's easy to walk from one line to another, but when hundreds of people do it every day, the inconvenience adds up.

A participant asked how the Blue Line and Red Line platforms will be connected. Mr. Ennis noted that this was the biggest technical challenge for the project. He said that platforms are offset and the team is working around the support structures so the escalators, stairways and elevators are in the pay area of the station.

Barry Steinberg asked if the station would be as deep as the Red Line at Porter Square. Mr. Ennis said it would be more similar to the Red Line at South Station.

An attendee asked why there was only one escalator at the platforms. Mr. Ennis explained that the platforms are center configurations, with access to both directions.

A member of the audience asked if Cambridge Street would need to be excavated. Mr. Ennis said the team would shut down half the street at a time. Mr. Pelletier added that the team is currently developing a construction phasing plan, with detour options. Cambridge Street would not be shut down in its entirety, but lanes would be affected. The full plan will be available for public review.

David Sargent, Liberty Hotel, said that traffic in the area is disruptive on a regular basis, especially with the need for emergency vehicles to move through Charles Circle. He asked how disruptive construction impacts would be. Mr. Ennis said that the team is working with MEEI to move the construction staging to their parking lot, so construction vehicles would use Fruit Street and offset traffic. Mr. Hamwey offered to provide a project briefing to the hotel.

David Lyons said that the parking lot at MEEI should actually be parkland.

Chris Horton, East Boston, asked if there was a commitment in place to build the project. Mr. Hamwey said that the Commonwealth considers it a worthy project, but that it is not included as a funded project in the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), a prerequisite for receiving federal funding. He said that the only capital funds currently available in the RTP for expansion projects, are committed to the Green Line Extension project and improvements to the Fairmount Line.

A participant asked if there was a commitment in the SIP to build this project a few years ago. Mr. Hamwey said there was a previous construction commitment in the SIP, but that the Commonwealth had negotiated an agreement with the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) in response to a lawsuit. That agreement changed the SIP commitment list (while maintaining the level of air quality benefits).

An attendee suggested including retail establishments within the stations themselves to offset the costs for the stations.

An audience member asked how long design plans can remain on the shelf before they become obsolete. Mr. Pelletier said that tunnel construction techniques have not changed that drastically and suggested a plan could remain valid for about 30 years. Mr. Hamwey added that the recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 shows the importance of having viable construction plans on the shelf.

A participant noted that over half the lights at Charles Circle are not operational. Laura Sargent, Office of Representative Walz, said her office has been working with DCR and the MBTA. She said the lights should be fixed by Friday.

Ms. Cantlon asked if the team plans to remove part of the front of the new MGH station. Mr. Ennis said one side of the wall would need to be moved slightly, but the design integrity would be maintained.

Matt Naeve said that he had a similar commute from East Boston to Cambridge as a previous speaker. He said the project would save him about 15 minutes off his commute each way. He asked if there were other ways to speed the connection. Mr. Hamwey said that suggestions have been made to look at a pedestrian connection, but that the legal commitment is to design a rail connector, not a pedestrian connector.

An audience member asked about a cost estimate. Mr. Pelletier said it would be available in a few months, noting the construction methodology had to be in place before a cost could be determined. He said it would take about six years to build.

Someone asked if the old tunnels could be used for storage. Mr. Ennis said the team is pursing this possibility with the MBTA. He noted that four 6-car trains could currently fit on the tail tracks as designed.

Mr. D'Amico asked if the Government Center project is being incorporated. Mr. Pelletier said the team is coordinating with the MBTA, which presented at a recent Working Group meeting. Mr. Hamwey said that other than the location of the headhouses, there is little impact of one project onto another.

A participant asked about the diameter of the TBM. It is approximately 20 feet.

The meeting was adjourned at 7PM. The project team stayed to informally answer additional questions.

EOT Contract No.: STV_REDBLU
STV Contract No.: 40-14212
Meeting Minutes Prepared by: Regan Checchio, RVA

Attendance

John Achatz*, Beacon Hill Civic Association
Malik-Al-Khatib
Carl Bickerdike
Lalita Bumpen
Marie Cantlon*, West End Civic Association
Noah Chesnin*, Conservation Law Foundation
John Collins
Vivien Craffie
Jim Cronin, Boston Courant
Joe Crowley, Massachusetts General Hospital
Bob D'Amico*, Boston Transportation Department
Marc Ebuno
Danny Elhaddad
Jim Fitzgerald, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Stephen Gaun
G.Y Giriamsky
Alan Greene, East Cambridge Planning Team
Ivan Hansen
Kimberly Herrmann
John Hostage, Association for Public Transportation
W.E. David Hulbert, Office of Councilor Yoon
Jaleesa Irizarry
Linda Jordan-Dow
Bill Kuttner, CTPS
Dean Liedberg
Donna LoConte, Office of Senator Petruccelli
David Lyons
Tim Macaskill
Joseph McDonald
Christopher Morton
Matthew Neave
Stephen O'Leary
Richard Olivo
Dick Reynolds
Jacquelyn Rosatto, Office of Senator Petruccelli
Brian Rose
David Sargent, Liberty Hotel
Laura Sargent, Office of Representative Walz
Donald Sheehan
Chas Simmons
Michelle Snyder, Office of Councilor Ross
Barry Steinberg
Frank Stieger
Brian Sylvain, UP Tunnel Workers Local #88
Karen Cord Taylor
John Vitagliano*, Town of Winthrop
Trey Joseph Wadsworth
Robert Walton
J.L. Watson
Edward Wellington
Jason Zogg

* denotes Member/Alternate of Project Working Group